

Free Spirit 50K - Athlete's Manual – 2026 edition



Contents:

1. Registration info
2. Race Day schedule
3. Course
4. Aid station info
5. Bag drop info
6. Crew info
7. General rules
8. Awards
9. Course map and elevation

1. Registration info

- Athletes must register online through RaceRoster (see link on race website). The entry fee includes food and drink at the aid stations, food for finishers, medals, and a goodie bag.
- If you are registering as a visually impaired, handcycle, push-rim wheelchair, or wheelchair duo, just let us know when you register.
- There is no wait list and no bib transfers.
- There are no refunds, except in case of an adverse weather cancellation (for example, excessive heat or lightning) subject to the terms of our insurance.
- We strongly encourage you to spend a few extra bucks and get the Race Protector registration insurance when you register.
- There is a time limit of 9 hours to complete the race and receive an official result. That's a 17:22 per mile pace.

2. Race Day Schedule Sunday 5/16/26

The race starts and finishes at the Leyden Town Hall at 16 West Leyden Road. Leyden, MA. This is not to be confused with the Leyden Town Offices! The Town Hall is accessible and has accessible bathrooms. There are also composting portable toilets outside.

WHERE TO PARK: Parking is available around the Town Hall. Please do not park out front or block the garage doors of the fire station!

7 AM: bib pick-up and athlete check-in at the Leyden Town Hall.

8:15 AM: Bag drop closes.

8:30 AM: Race starts at the Town Hall!

Awards given on a rolling basis

5:30 PM Timing closes. Please note the timing cut-off of 9 hours.

3. Course

(for a map of the course + aid / crew stations, see section 9 'Maps')

The 50K loop has 4,281 feet of elevation gain, which means there are challenging uphill, and of course, downhill to contend with. The race is mostly on unpaved roads, but has a few short paved sections, and a few “class IV” sections. These are akin to logging roads.

Turn-by-turn description:

(1 -5 miles)

The race starts in Leyden center, by the historic Town Hall on West Leyden Road. It runs immediately out of town north on unpaved Greenfield Road. After 1.25 miles of mostly downhill running, the route takes a left turn onto Alexander Road. Here begins a climb of about 1.2 miles to the intersection of North County Road, where you will take a right. Follow this dirt road across the border into Vermont on what’s called Old County Road.

NOTE: *Small change in course this year!* Instead of going down the eroded and muddy gully on Old County Road, athletes will divert right into a hayfield and descend through that field to Packers Corners. The hayfield will be mowed but a little rough.

At the Packer’s Corner intersection, you will turn right right to enjoy an almost 2- mile downhill stretch down Packer Corners Road to Brattleboro Road and towards the five-mile mark. Keep your eyes open for the large wooden sculptures of local artist Fenwick on the right.

(5-10 miles)

Turning left from Packers Corner Road onto Brattleboro road, you will turn left *again* after 0.25 miles and head uphill on Sweet Pond Road. (Note to crew and spectators: Weatherhead Hollow Pond offers parking and is a scenic spot to hang out). This is a continuous climb for 3.5 miles. Up toward the top, you’ll encounter aid station #1 (Guilford) at mile 7.6 and then continue uphill and then bear right to remain on Sweet Pond Road. After a few shorter uphill and longer downhills, you will reach the ten-mile mark just before taking a left turn onto Stage Road.

(10-15 miles)

Stage Road climbs for 1.6 miles, through woods and past lovely old farms, and then begins a mile-long descent into Green River Village. This is without a doubt one of the most scenic sections of this course, or of any course out there! The route leads athletes through the 1870s covered bridge, with the 1810 crib dam to the right.

Once through the bridge, athletes continue straight ahead up Stage Road for a long (very long) and steady climb, with the 15-mile mark right before reaching the top, where they will find

Halifax aid station #2 and the bag drop. This is possibly the most challenging part of the course. Parts of this dirt road can be eroded and rough in May.

(15-20 miles)

Near the top of the hill, you will continue straight (keeping left) onto Amidon Road, and a long descent follows on Amidon, which turns into New County Road at the border. These are wooded dirt roads, with beautiful views of the hills, and one border crossing (VT to MA). The 20-mile mark appears right before athletes finish their descent of New County Road and arrive back into the Green River Valley on Green River Road.

NOTE: Our signs at the corner of Franklin Hill Road seem to wander off every year before folks get there. Do NOT go up Franklin Hill Road! Keep going straight down Amidon Road.

(20 - 25 miles)

At the bottom of New County Road, take a right onto paved Green River Road. After a mile of continuing due south along the river, you will take a left to remain on Green River Road and will find aid station #3 (Colrain) shortly thereafter. Athletes then cross the bridge on West Leyden Road and then run up West Leyden Road for 0.2 miles. There, a left turn takes them to River Road, which they will follow for 2.5 miles. The dirt road turns to an unmaintained (and in places rough and narrow) dirt road before it comes out on Packer's Corner Road, where athletes take a right. After less than a half mile, you will turn left onto a logging road next to Abijah Prince Road. At the top of that logging road, athletes will turn right onto Abijah Prince Road. This is where the Abijah Prince homestead was. This length of Abijah Prince Road is little more than a logging road, with a few challenging ledge outcroppings.

(25 miles - finish)

A little past the 25-mile mark, and at the end of the long climb up Abijah Prince Road, athletes will come back on Sweet Pond Road (thereby completing the big loop), and turn right down the hill. This section of 0.5 miles is the other section that athletes will run twice (once uphill and once downhill). Here is where Aid station #1 (Guilford) doubles as aid station #4. At 26.3 miles, athletes will take a right onto Belden Hill Road first up and then back down to the Packer's Corner intersection, where they will continue straight and past the Total Loss Farm. The course takes a left into the hayfield and you will follow this up to where it rejoins Old County Road. At 28 miles, you will cross the VT-MA border one last time into Massachusetts, and keep going straight south on North County Road, which will offer a few last challenging short (but steep) hills, and also beautiful views of distant mountains (Mount Toby and Mount Norwottuck). At the end of North County Road, athletes will encounter pavement and then turn left onto West Leyden Road. After just 0.2 miles they will curve left again to remain on West Leyden Road, downhill towards the town center of Leyden and the finish line.

4. Aid Station info

If you have specific dietary needs, you will need to pack your own snack food in a bag. There will be a bag drop and pick-up at the aid station at 15 miles.

Please remember that aid station open and close times are non-negotiable!

Aid station 1 (mile 7.6) located shortly before the intersection of Sweet Pond Road and Abijah Prince Road.

Outbound athletes should be through this aid station by 10:45 am.

Aid station 2 (mile 15) + bag drop : located at the top of Stage Road.

This aid station will close at 1:05 pm.

Aid station 3 (mile 20) + crew access : 10 mile bridge in West Leyden (intersection of West Leyden road and Green River Road).

This aid station will close at 2:35 pm.

Crew: GPS 341 W Leyden Road, Colrain MA 01340. <https://goo.gl/maps/KjahjQMH57PrUoK7>

Aid station 4 (mile 25.6) located just after the intersection of Sweet Pond Road and Abijah Prince Road. Yes, you've seen this one before!

The aid station will close for inbound athletes at 3:58 pm.

Fuel and hydration available at aid stations:

Athletes are encouraged to use their own judgment about fueling, but carrying hydration, gels, etc. is highly encouraged.

The Free Spirit 50K is a **cup-free race!** In an attempt to reduce race waste, we are eliminating all disposable single use cups. Please come prepared. The goodie bag will have one foldable silicone cup.

Each aid station will be well stocked with standard 50K event fuel and hydration: Water and Tailwind, Untapped Maple gels, pretzels, potato chips, bananas, peanut butter, etc. There will also be some basic first aid, sunscreen, antiseptic spray, and insect repellent available.

5. Bag Drop info

There is one bag drop halfway the race (15 miles). Bags will be returned to the town hall after 1 PM.

- Label bag(s) clearly with your name & bib number.
- All bags must be dropped in the Leyden Town Hall before 8:15 AM on race morning.
- Keep your bag to a reasonable size and weight, and easy to transport for our volunteers.
- What to put in drop bags: fresh shoes, socks, snacks, electrolytes, gels, skin lube, blister kit, extra layers if the forecast is for cold / rainy weather.
- Make sure it is closed and contains no valuable items, or things that can break. Do not put glass containers in your drop bag. We might drop it.
- Drop Bags and items left at the aid stations will not be returned to the town hall until the aid station closes, so be mindful of that when leaving items at aid stations.

6. Crew Info

- Athletes are allowed one crew vehicle per athlete
- Crew vehicles : please do not meet athletes at points other than the access point shown below. The crew access station is in a place along the course that is easily accessible by car, and about 3 miles from start/finish (athletes take a different route to get there). Many sections of the course are **not drivable**, so avoid getting lost or obstructing narrow roads by *only* driving and parking at the designated crew access point.
- Are you picking up a athlete from the course? Please let us know, so we don't go looking for them!
- Directions to Crew Access Station: warning: mobile signal is not guaranteed in this area, so make sure to download/print maps or directions beforehand.

7. General Rules

Wear your bib where we can see it, especially at the finish line. Don't litter. Have fun. If you aren't having fun and need to DNF, help us help you by calling it quits at an aid station.

8. Awards

Awards will be given to the top-3 female and male finishers.

9. Course map and elevation profile

★ The start is in Leyden Center at the junction of Greenfield Road and West Leyden Road

★ Staffed aid station with portable toilet

★ Staffed aid station

